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ABSTRACT

Classroom teachers in the 1990s are encountering more and more students who are uninterested in learning. In fact, some students begrudge even opening up their books whether it be to read, spell or solve math problems. These negative attitudes are believed by many teachers to have a significant bearing on the students' ability to perform well in any given subject area. A study therefore investigated the correlation between attitudes toward reading and performance in reading. Subjects, 35 eighth-grade students out of a class of 360 predominantly white, lower middle class, urban junior high students in Ohio were given the Wisconsin Reading Attitude Inventory Form which assessed their attitudes toward reading. The scores on the inventory were then compared to the grades the students received in their seventh grade reading class last year to see if a correlational relationship existed. The results were determined by establishing the mean, standard deviation, median, Cronbach's reliability of each part of the inventory and how they correlated with the grades students received. For this group of readers, the results revealed that a low correlation existed between any attitude score or a combination of scores and grades in seventh grade reading class. (Contains seven references and one table.) (Author/TB)

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Comparing Reading Attitudes and Academic Achievement of Eighth Graders

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ABSTRACT

For this study, thirty-five eighth grade students out of a class population of 360 in a predominantly white, lower middle class, urban junior high were given the Wisconsin Reading Attitude Inventory Form which assessed their attitudes towards reading. The scores of the inventory were then compared to the grades the students received in their 7th grade Reading class last year to see if a correlational relationship existed. The results were determined by establishing the mean, standard deviation, median, Cronbach's reliability of each part of the inventory and how they correlated with the grades students received. For this group of readers, the results revealed a low correlation existed between any attitude score or a combination of scores and grades in 7th grade Reading class.

Comparing Reading Attitudes and Academic Achievement of Eighth Graders

Purpose of the study

Classroom teachers in the 1990's are encountering more and more students who show a disinterest in learning. In fact, some students begrudge even opening up their books whether it be to read, spell, or solve math problems. These negative attitudes are believed by many teachers to have a significant bearing on the students' ability to perform well in any given subject area. So, if teachers are going to have any success in educating students, a closer look must be taken at determining the reasons behind students' apathy and negativity towards learning. Obviously, to examine students' attitudes in each subject area would be a very time consuming task. Therefore, this research study will focus on students' attitudes towards reading and its affect on their academic achievement.

Previous Studies of Reading Attitudes and Achievement

Alexander and Filler (1976) found that little research had been done on the relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement. However, limited information did suggest a relationship existed between higher achievement

and more positive attitudes. Hammons, Miriam, and others (1981) found that little research has been conducted to determine whether the affective scales that many teachers use to measure students' attitudes towards reading provides accurate information, nor have researchers adequately compared reading attitudes according to student achievement and socioeconomic levels. Results of a study done by Shannon (1980) indicate that high test scores reinforce a positive attitude among better readers and low test scores reinforce a negative attitude among poor readers. Yet Mikulecky (1978) suggested that students can score high on reading achievement and reflect negative attitudes towards reading and those with low reading achievement can reflect interest in reading. More recently, White (1989) conducted a study to investigate various relationships between attitudes of students towards reading and their reading achievement and found that there was a low but consistent positive relationship between students' attitude towards reading and their reading achievement. Also, Russ (1989) conducted a study to compare reading attitudes to reading achievement in a junior high school in East Los Angles. His findings were even though the Gifted and Talented students showed a higher positive attitude towards reading than other students, students who were reading far below grade level, manifested very positive attitudes towards reading.

Summary

From the studies cited, there is still inconclusive evidence as to whether a definite relationship exists between reading attitudes and reading achievement.

Major Questions and Definitions

This research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Are students' negative attitudes towards reading due to poor academic achievement?
2. Is student negativity towards reading due to other reasons than academic achievement?
3. Are students who have positive attitudes towards reading necessarily good students academically?
4. Is there a correlation between students' attitudes towards reading and their academic achievement?

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, several terms need further clarification. To start with, the term attitude refers to how a person feels, either positively or negatively, towards an idea, subject, or situation. Next, academic achievement will refer to the grades the student received on his or her report card. Students defined as a good student academically received a C grade or higher in

Reading. Poor academic achievement was then defined as receiving a D or F grade in Reading.

Method

Subjects

The participants in this study were thirty-five 8th grade students from a predominately white junior high school in Northwestern Ohio with a student population of 774. Many of these students come from families that are lower-middle class and have attended little or no college. These students were selected as participants because their teacher was interested in whether a relationship existed between reading attitude and academic achievement. However, these students voluntarily chose to participate after being told about the study.

Measures

The instrument used to conduct this research was the Wisconsin Attitude Inventory (Dullin and Chester, 1979) which consisted of four parts. The first part asked students whether they would rather read a book or do some leisure-time activity. Students responded by placing an X in one of five boxes which best represented what they would rather do. The second part consisted of 20 statements about reading whereby

students indicated whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each statement. The third part had the students give a point value for ten activities with the first two activities being reading books and reading newspapers and magazines. Whatever point value students gave each activity must add up to 100 points. The fourth part was a self-assessment in which students ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being high and 5 being low) how well they read, how much they read, and how much they felt they liked to read. The scores of the attitude survey were then compared to the grades the students received last year in 7th grade Reading.

Procedures

The attitude survey was distributed to each of the thirty-five participants in the teacher's two 8th Grade Language Arts classes. Each section was explained to students first, then they were to complete that section. Once the students completed the survey, they slipped it inside a manila envelope. Each of the particiipant's grades from last year's Reading class was obtained from the students' file in the school office.

Results

The attitude inventories of the thirty-five participants were statistically scored by computing the means, standard deviation, median, Cronbach's reliability and correlation with the grades standard deviation, median, Cronbach's reliability, and a correlation with grade with each part of the inventory. The results of these computations are presented in Table 1.

Place Table 1 about here

Upon looking at whether negative attitudes towards reading was due to poor academic achievement, ten of the thirty-five students surveyed showed scores that indicated a definite negative attitude towards reading does exist. Yet upon examining their grades, only four out of the ten had performed poorly academically. Elevén other students received a score in one section that indicated a negative attitude in reading existed, but that attitude did not exist in the other section. When their grades were checked, six out of the eleven performed poorly academically. So twenty one students were defined as having a negative attitude towards reading yet eleven of the students received grades that were C or higher. Considering these results, it is obvious that there has to be other reasons behind these

students negativity towards reading since most of the students are academically achieving satisfactory grades or higher.

In assessing whether students who have positive attitudes towards reading are good students academically, it was discovered that fourteen students had a positive attitude towards reading. Of these fourteen students, two had an average score in one section and above average in the other. Then one student scored above average in one section and exceptional in the other. Upon checking their grades, three out of the fourteen students did not do well academically in reading. However, the majority of the students who had a positive attitude towards reading are academically achieving satisfactory grades or higher in reading. When the scores of each part of the inventory were analyzed, the results indicated that no correlation existed at the .05 or the .1 level between any attitude scores or combination of scores or grades in 7th grade Reading class.

Conclusions

Despite the evidence that slightly more than 50% of the students with a negative attitude towards reading did poorly academically, and 79% of the students with a positive attitude towards reading ranked average or above academically, this study showed no correlation existed

between negative attitudes and academic achievement. While the Wisconsin Attitude Inventory is a highly reliable measure, whatever was measured in interest and reading activity does not correlate with these students grades or any previous studies that have been conducted. There may be two reasons behind this with one being that grades are related to more than interest and reading ability. Another reason may be that for all the Wisconsin Attitude Inventory has reliable results, it stands a chance of not giving valid results due the risk of participants not expressing their true attitude. So for future studies using the Wisconsin Attitude Inventory, when the participants complete the survey, an interview could follow sometime shortly after to check on whether the participant's oral response is consistent with the written response previously given. The interview process could be randomly done among a set of participants just to check on the validity of the inventory.

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Table 1

Wisconsin Reading Attitude Inventory Results and 7th Grade Reading Grades

	Mean	SD	MD	Cronbach's	Coor Grade
Part 1	47.2	13.9	45	.85	.04
Part 2	65.8	15.0	67	.89	.08
Part 1 and Part 2	113.0	26.5	114	.92	.11
Top 2	16.8	11.7	15	N/A	.01
Subj. 1	2.8	1.0	3	N/A	.12
Subj. 2	3.3	1.3	3	N/A	.01
Subj. 3	2.9	1.1	3	N/A	.12
Subj. 1+2+3	9.1	2.7	9	.84?	.12
Mean Grade Aver.	1.7	1.2	1.75	N/A	N/A